

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, UK, IO, AS

SUBJ: DIEGO GARCIA

1. AMBASSADOR, IN COURSE OF QUESTION-AND-ANSWER PERIOD FOLLOWING HIS SPEECH ON AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS AT AMCHAM 13TH ANNULA GENERAL MEETING, SYDNEY, MARCH 29, WAS ASKED ABOUT GOA "PROTEST" TO WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW REGARDING NAVAL BUILD-UP IN INDIAN OCEAN. AMBASSADOR RESPONDED BY SAYING: (A) THAT AUSTRALIA HAD NOT PROTESTED, BUT RATHER HAD URGED BOTH POWERS TO RESTRAIN THEIR BUILD-UP IN INDIAN OCEAN; (B) THAT HE HAD RECEIVED NO SPECIFIC REACTIONS FROM WASHINGTON; AND (C) THAT IT IS OF COURSE OUR GLOBAL DESIRE TO NEGOTIATE ARMS LIMITATIONS AND REDUCTION OF FORCES.

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2. AMBASSADOR TOOK THE OCCASION TO POINT OUT: (A) LIMITED NATURE OF OUR PLANS TO UPGRADE NAVAL SUPPORT FACILITIES IN DIEGO GARCIA; (B) ANY FLEET LIKE US WITH WORLDWIDE RESPONSIBILITIES HAS TO HAVE ADEQUATE COMMUNICATIONS AND RE-SUPPLY FACILITIES; (C) UNLIKE USSR, WE HAVE NO SUCH FACILITY IN THAT AREA; (D) USSR NAVAL PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN HAS GROWN IN RECENT YEARS AND IS SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER THAN US PRESENCE; AND (E) IT IS IN THE COMMON INTEREST TO HAVE AN EQUILIBRIUM OF FORCES WITHOUT WHICH RECIPROCAL REDUCTIONS ARE UNLIKELY.

3. THRUST OF AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS GOT HEADLINE TREATMENT IN THE AUSTRALIAN, FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE IN CANBERRA TIMES AND LIMITED COVERAGE ELSEWHERE IN THE PRESS. TV COVERAGE WAS GOOD.

4. COMMENT: DIEGO GARCIA HAS BEEN GIVEN WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY HERE, WITH A GOOD DEAL OF DISTORTION IN TERMS OF ITS BEING MAJOR NEW BASE THREATENING EQUILIBRIUM IN INDIAN OCEAN, AND INVOLVING AUSTRALIAN "PROTESTS" TO US. WE BELIEVE AMBASSADOR'S WELL PUBLICIZED RESPONSE WILL HELP PUT ISSUE IN PERSPECTIVE IN WAY LEAST LIKELY TO DEPICT OUR POSITION AT LOGGERHEADS WITH THAT FO GOA. ISSUE NEVERTHELESS LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO BE CONTROVERSIAL, WITH AUSTRALIAN OPINION DIVIDED AND WITH GOA ATTITUDE ADVERSE YET RESTRAINED.
GREEN

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RUSH

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Message Attributes

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